

Telecommunications Commission Meeting Minutes, July 23, 2009

I. Call to Order

Chairman Terry Lottes called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. in the County Administration conference room in the Administration Center, located at 1300 Courthouse Road.

II. Roll Call

The following members were present: Terry Lottes, Thomas Kimbrell, Danielle Davis, John Johnson and Jim Minor. Also in attendance was Marie Schuler representing Comcast, and Paul Miller from Verizon. Cathy Riddle, Public Information Office, represented the County.

III. Presentations by the Public

There were no presentations by the public.

IV. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Minor moved to approve the May 2009 minutes; Mr. Kimbrell seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

V. Members' Concerns

Mr. Johnson said that a resident in his district wanted to know when Verizon services would be brought to his community. He asked that the email Mr. Miller sent to him that included information about when Verizon services would be available in Stafford. He asked that Mr. Miller's email be forwarded to the rest of the Commission on online sources of information that Verizon provides to subscribers regarding availability of services.

Mr. Minor did not report any concerns.

Mr. Lottes said one of his neighbors was frustrated in trying to get cable service provided to his neighborhood; it did not meet the minimum requirements for density. He asked Mr. Miller if cable construction was ongoing in Stafford. Mr. Miller said that yes, there were about 15 or so main streets in Stafford where construction was ongoing. He said that it would take about 4 – 7 years for buildout.

Mr. Kimbrell asked if Mount Pleasant would receive Verizon services because the neighborhood meets the density requirements. Mr. Miller asked for a specific address and a phone number.

Mr. Kimbrell asked for a status update from Mr. Miller on Verizon broadcasting Board of Supervisors meetings. Mr. Miller stated that they were being broadcast, and that the School Board meetings were also being broadcast live.

Ms. Davis discussed an issue that a citizen in her district had with Verizon. She stated that she would email Mr. Miller the address of the individual.

VI. Agenda Additions

There were no agenda additions.

VII. New Business

Broadband

Mr. Kimbrell asked for an electronic version of the broadband application that the County was considering filling out to obtain federal stimulus funds. Mr. Miller said that it was 141 pages and that the deadline was August 14, 2009.

Mr. Minor asked how can the county provide access to broadband to underserved areas in Stafford?

Mr. Lottes stated that the County is trying to find this out with the survey that the Commission had discussed asking citizens if they want/need broadband service.

Mr. Kimbrell stated that King George had loaned money to a company to complete their broadband buildout but he was not sure how the operation was set up. He suggested that the Commission invite King George reps to a future meeting. He stated that part of Stafford's problem is its low density development.

Mr. Lottes asked the Comcast and Verizon representatives if they were working with localities to get the stimulus funds to finalize their buildout.

Ms. Schuler reported that she has met with Spotsylvania has requested a meeting to talk about a public/private partnership.

Mr. Miller reported that he had not received any such requests from localities.

Ms. Schuler stated that there were many concerns with a partnership because of reporting requirements.

Discussion then ensued about ownership of the cable/broadband infrastructure if the County received stimulus money.

Ms. Davis stated that the Commission needed to complete the survey for citizens on the need for broadband service.

Mr. Kimbrell stated that he had sent the Commission a draft of a survey a few months back..

Ms. Davis said that she would start working with Treasurer Laura Rudy on distributing the survey.

Public Access

Ms. Davis said that Ms. Knight had met with Pamela Haines.

Miscellaneous Issues

Discussion ensued on the location of cable companies' plants in Stafford. Mr. Lottes stated that the Commission had asked Cox and Comcast for detailed information on where their plants were installed in Stafford.

Ms. Schuler said that Comcast was working with the state to create the maps.

Mr. Lottes asked if the Commission could receive the same information.

Ms. Schuler said that Comcast and the Commission would need to establish a confidentiality agreement since the information was considered proprietary.

Mr. Lottes asked if the Commission could receive the address for plats and have the GIS staff plat them out for each road to determine who has cable service and who does not. He stated that the information would not have to be publicly available and that access to the information would be very strict. He asked if Verizon would be able to provide this information as well.

Mr. Miller said he would ask.

Mr. Lottes requested that Ms. Riddle ask Cox for a similar map.

Ms. Schuler notified Commission members of several Comcast Channel changes that were scheduled to go into effect on August 1. She stated that customers were being notified via a newspaper advertisement, a letter and a "crawler message" on the Weather Channel.

Mr. Lottes stated that Comcast had a mix of analog and digital channels. He asked if there are digital versions of the analog channels.

Ms. Schuler said this is done through simulcasting.

VIII. Adjournment

At 7:43 p.m., Mr. Johnson moved to adjourn the meeting; Mr. Kimbrell seconded the motion; it passed unanimously.